<u>SHADOWMAN</u>

Issue One

"FEAR OF THE DARK"
Part One of Three
by
Andy Diggle

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RECAP

When Jack Boniface was bound to the Shadow Loa - a powerful, angry voodoo spirit - he became the latest inheritor of the Shadowman legacy. For years, he struggled to control the loa's violent urges - a struggle he ultimately lost.

Alyssa Myles was an Abettor, raised and trained to help the Shadowman fight the forces of evil. But Jack turned his back on her and disappeared into the Deadside - the twisted nether-realm of the dead.

That was five years ago.

Since then, Alyssa has been left to battle horrors from the Deadside - and help the people of New Orleans - all alone...

PAGE 1

1) Small, very close. A voodoo GRIS-GRIS (leather-bound charm pendant) is hung around a black woman's neck. It's ALYSSA MYLES, though we're too close in on the pendant to see her face, as she ties the leather string behind her neck.

LETTERING NOTE: These captions are SHADOWMAN'S internal monologue, though readers might think them Alyssa's. Shadowman's captions - and dialogue - are always distinctive WHITE TEXT ON BLACK.

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
Every day is a struggle.

2) Small, very close. Alyssa cocks the slide of an M1911 COLT .45 automatic. Again, we're too close to see who's doing this; our focus is on the gun. It's a simple tool of black metal, wood grip, well worn by age and use.

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
Every step forward, a fight.

FX
CHK-CHAK

3) Small, very close. She thumbs cartridges into a spare clip. The bullets have voodoo VÈVÈS (ritual patterns) carved into the tips. Magic bullets.

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
But I take that step. And the next.

4) Small, very close. She tucks the gun into a tactical holster on the back of her jeans.

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
'Cause it's that, or look back.

5) Small, very close. POV from behind Alyssa as she shrugs on a black leather jacket. The twin-snake VÈVÈ of DAMBALLAH painted/embroidered on the back. We do not see her face.

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
And what's behind me...

6) Small, very close. Her hand reaches for CAR KEYS on a side table. A candle burns beside a FRAMED PHOTO of ALYSSA, DOX and JACK BONIFACE. The photo is from five years ago, soon after they first met. They're happy, laughing and smiling, holding beer bottles, leaning back against Dox's old '57 Plymouth Fury in the sunshine.

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
I can't stand to look it in the eye.

PAGE 2

1) BIG! NIGHT. Hero shot of ALYSSA MYLES striding down the front porch steps toward us. This is our first proper look at her. She's five years older than we last saw her. Five years tougher, harder, more experienced; a veteran. No longer the wide-eyed apprentice, she is now a tough, no-nonsense, supernatural ass-kicker. She's leaving Dox's old safehouse at 363 Rampart Street, New Orleans. Vertical iron bars over the ground-floor windows; slatted wooden shutters on the inside. The door is reinforced steel with a peep-hole.

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
I told myself I could start over. Go back to a normal life.

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
Walk away from the guilt and pain.

2) Full width. Over-the-shoulder as she strides towards a beat-up old Jeep Wrangler. A practical off-road vehicle with bull-bars.

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
But the ghosts of the past, they're always with me.

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
Buried inside of me...

3) Full width. High, wide aerial landscape shot looking down on the Jeep as it weaves along a single-lane track towards/through the Louisiana bayou. The headlights cut through the darkness ahead, but all around is DEEP BLACK SHADOW.

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
Way down deep in the dark.

PAGE 3

1) Wide. Alyssa steps out of the Jeep, background panel right. Foreground panel left, a dirt-poor, gray-bearded old black guy named ISIAH turns to her. He sits shelling crawfish on a crude wooden JETTY beside a rough-looking SHACK HOUSE, deep in the swamp. Not important in this panel, but there's a small boat with an outboard motor docked at the jetty. The scene is lit by moonlight and paraffin lamps.

ISIAH
That a *gris-gris* I see roun' your neck, pretty lady?

ALYSSA
Figure I need all the help I can get.

2) Isiah straightens as Alyssa walks up to him. Alyssa shrugs, not making a big deal of her reputation.

ISIAH
Heard all 'bout you. You that mambo priestess...
(link)
Alyssa Myles.

ALYSSA
I know a little craft. Enough to get by, help people out.
(link)
That's why I'm here. I need a guide, take me deep into the bayou.

3) Isiah grins, showing missing teeth, but his eyes are cold and beady. Slightly sinister.

ISIAH
You been playing with fire, girl.
(link)
Dangerous thing they say, a little knowledge, yes it is...

4) Alyssa stands her ground, hands on hips, no bullshit, giving us a salty look.

ALYSSA
You want my money or we done talking?

5) Isiah hobbles away toward the boat on the jetty. Alyssa follows.

ISIAH
Ease up, I'll take you. Ain't nobody knows these waters like ol' Isiah...
(link)
Best damn guide in the Big Easy, that's me!

6) Close on Alyssa, scowling, tough. Hers is a hard-bitten life.

ALYSSA

New Orleans may be big...

(link)

But it ain't never been easy.

<u>PAGE 4</u>

1) WIDE. Deep NIGHT. Small in the panel, the little boat now chugs through the dark, still waters of the swamp. Alyssa sits up front with a heavy-duty flashlight. Isiah sits at the rear, manning the outboard. In the background, black trees hung with vines. Moonlight on the water. Creepy...

ISIAH
(from boat)
So what brings a city girl way out here in the dead of night with a map she drew herself...?

2) Move in on the boat. Alyssa checks a hand-drawn map with her flashlight. Isiah in back.

ALYSSA
You heard of <u>cartomancy</u>? Map magic.
(link)
See, there's something in the water. Been making kids sick, act crazy. State, water company won't do a damn thing...

3) Serious, Alyssa lowers the map and looks out across the water. Black woods beyond. She's fully aware that she's heading into danger. But she's doing it anyway, because it's the right thing to do.

ALYSSA
So I looked into it. Drew a vèvè, asked the right questions.
(link)
Turns out, the water's <u>cursed</u>. And the source - it's out here in the <u>bayou</u>.

4) Alyssa turns to look back at Isiah grinning his creepy grin.

ISIAH
There was another mambo used to live out this way. White girl, crazy hair. But she long gone now...

ALYSSA
You mean that English punk? She weren't no mambo. More like a <u>bokor</u>...
(link)
A <u>sorceress</u>.

5) Alyssa faces front again with a stern, disapproving look on her face.

ALYSSA
A true mambo <u>respects</u> the mysteries. <u>Serves</u> them.
(link)
Not the other way round.

PAGE 5

1) The boat has pulled up at a patch of semi-dry land, deep in the swamp. Isiah is out, tying up the boat to a gnarled tree. Gingerly, Alyssa steps out with her flashlight in hand, wary of the boggy ground. Tendrils of low-lying mist creep in...

ISIAH
We gotta walk from here.
(link)
Watch your step now - or the swamp, it'll pull you right down!

ALYSSA
Terrific.

2) POV from behind Alyssa as she follows Isiah into the THICKENING FOG, which her flashlight barely penetrates. He's now little more than a vague gray silhouette on panel right...

ALYSSA
Fog's coming up. We good...?

ISIAH
I know the path, yes I do. Long as you stay close to ol' Isiah, ain't nothin' to <u>fear</u>...
(link)
Heh heh!

3) Wide on Alyssa as she stops, looking around in alarm, aiming the flashlight beam into the now-impenetrable fog. There is no sign of Isiah. No background. JUST FOG. Alyssa's body language is tense, alert, dynamic --

ALYSSA
Easy for you to say when--
(link)
Isiah...?

4) Small. Close on Alyssa, scowling. Realizing she's been suckered, ditched.

ALYSSA
<u>Isiah</u>!
(link)
<u>Son</u> of a...

5) Small. Close on the flashlight as the bulb EXPLODES!

FX
KESSHH

ALYSSA
(off-panel above)
Aah-!

PAGE 6

1) Full-width. Close on Alyssa as she slowly turns, EYES WIDE, at the sound of a voice from behind her. Her hand begins to glow with faint, fiery MAGICAL ENERGY as she prepares to cast a spell...

ZIWANDA
(ragged; no tail)
He is a good and faithful servant.
(link)
He has brought me many offerings...

2) Full width. POV from behind a HUGE DARK SHAPE LOOMING over Alyssa! The ZIWANDA is a huge, dark, hulking MONSTER, maybe 15 feet tall; squat and powerful as a gorilla, with a RHINO SKULL for a head and bare tree branches for antlers. Alyssa has dropped the broken flashlight; she takes a step back, drawing her gun with one hand, inscribing a glowing voodoo VÈVÈ with the other --

ZIWANDA
(ragged)
You shall not be the last.

3) BIG! POV from behind Alyssa as the Ziwanda LOOMS over her. Tiny points of light glitter in its empty eye sockets. A dread beast dredged up from African myth. Alyssa holds out her glowing vèvè like a circular MAGIC SHIELD, maybe 3 feet in diameter --

ALYSSA
What-- What are you...?

ZIWANDA
Your vèvè will not shield you.
(link)
Your gris-gris will not protect you.
(link)
I am the grinder of bones. He who stops the waters. And you, little offering...

PAGE 7

1) The monster SWATS Alyssa aside! Her shield vèvè SHATTERS --

ZIWANDA
(ragged)
You are mine!

FX
THWAKK

ALYSSA
UNNGH-!

2) Close. Sprawled on her side in the mud, Alyssa FIRES her Colt 45! Aiming two-handed, professional. Scowling --

ALYSSA
So it's like that.

FX
BDAM BDAM BDAM BDAM

3) Low angle. Alyssa scrambles to her feet, still FIRING! The monster ADVANCES on her, raising a mighty fist, about to strike! Her bullets don't even slow it down --

ZIWANDA
(ragged)
Your puny spears are as the bite of insects!

FX
BDAM BDAM BDAM BDAM

4) Alyssa DODGES aside just in the nick of time as the monster's fist SLAMS into the ground beside her, throwing up an impact crater of mud and moss --

FX
WHUNNCH

ALYSSA
Whoa-!

PAGE 8

1) Alyssa RUNS blindly through the fog! She's in trouble and she knows it!

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
Feels like forever I been running.

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
Trying to get away from the things I did.
The things I should have done.

ALYSSA
Hell with this-!

2) She suddenly SPLASHES into a sinkhole of muddy swamp-water, sinking up to her waist --

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
Trying to get back to the light.

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
But I can't. I'm trapped --

ALYSSA
Gahh-!
(link)
Smart, girl. Real smart-!

3) Snarling, focused and intense, she draws the glowing VÈVÈ of PAPA LEGBA (a stylized crossroads - check refs!) in the air --

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
Lost in the dark.

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
The darkness is a part of me now.

ALYSSA
Papa Legba, master of the crossroads,
guardian of doors and pathways...
(link)
Show me the way!

4) POV from behind Alyssa as she clambers out of the mud-hole. She looks up in surprise at a SWIRLING DEADSIDE PORTAL that begins to materialize in the air ahead of her. One arm of the crossroads vèvè has formed into an ARROW, pointing towards the portal --

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
And if there's one thing I learned...

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
One thing I know --

ALYSSA
What the hell...?

PAGE 9

FULL-PAGE SPLASH! Dynamic action hero shot as MAGPIE leaps out of the Deadside portal! He's battered and bruised, but angry and defiant. His costume ripped and torn to shreds, as if he's spent months battling for his life. GHOSTLY SKELETAL ARMS reach and claw at him from the portal - hungry souls still trapped in the Deadside --

IMPORTANT! In this scene ONLY, Jack Boniface is wearing the tattered remains of his MAGPIE outfit (check with editorial for visual ref). He does NOT wield Shadowman's Scythe.

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
... You can't run from your own shadow!

PAGE 10

1) Magpie crouches in the close foreground, PULLING OFF HIS MAGPIE MASK/HELMET to reveal JACK BONIFACE! Hunched, head bowed, exhausted; steadying himself with one hand on the ground. His hair in ragged twists, a little rougher than we've seen before; stubble on his jaw. He's been through hell. Alyssa GOGGLES at him from the background. This is the first time she's seen him in years!

ALYSSA
(small text)
Oh my God...
(link; normal text)
Jack-?!

2) Jack rises, disoriented, EXHAUSTED. Checking his surroundings. He's still wearing the ragged remains of the Magpie outfit, now minus the mask/helmet --

JACK
Alyssa! Where--
(link)
How did you...?

3) BIG! Jack and Alyssa TURN to see the MONSTER charging out of the fog, about to attack them both-!

ALYSSA
Talk later! We got problems-!

4) Close on Jack as he transforms into SHADOWMAN! The iconic white skull-paint magically appears on his face, but otherwise he still wears the remains of the Magpie outfit. He SNARLS, steeling himself for one last fight --

SHADOWMAN
No.
(link)
No more...

PAGE 11

1) BIG! Putting everything he has left into it, Shadowman leaps and PUNCHES the monster hard across the jaw, staggering it; the superhuman force of the blow knocking its head sideways --

SHADOWMAN
(jagged)
No more monsters!

FX
WHUD

ZIWANDA
(jagged)
RAAARH-!

2) Extreme close. The monster SCOWLS with suppressed, gathering fury....

ZIWANDA
(ragged)
You are weak, little shadow.

3) Close. Shadowman crouched, ready - but weak, and worried. It's not over, and he's used up the last of his energy. He's close to collapse.

SHADOWMAN
... Damn.

4) The monster SWATS Shadowman aside with a mighty backhand blow, sending him FLYING --

ZIWANDA
(ragged)
I am strong!

FX
THWOKK

SHADOWMAN
(jagged)
UNNGH-!

PAGE 12

1) SM SLAMS back into the trunk of a tree, BREAKING it --

FX
KRAKK

2) Snarling, Alyssa BEGINS to draw another vèvè in the air --

ALYSSA
Gotta do every thing my damn self...

3) BIG! POV from behind Alyssa, defending the unconscious SM. Her magic vèvè casts a BLAZING LIGHT! DAZZLED, the monster RECOILS, throwing its arms up to cover its eyes --

ALYSSA
You wanna hide in the fog, big guy? Let's see how you like a little light!

ZIWANDA
(ragged)
GRAAAAH-!

PAGE 13

1) Wide. Alyssa helps JACK (human now) sit up, weak and groggy; he's close to passing out. In the background, the monster retreats into the fog.

ALYSSA
It's backed off - for now! But it'll be back. I think we riled it.
(link)
C'mon, we gotta find the boat!

JACK
It-- It's really you...
(link)
Not another... trick of the shadows...

2) Alyssa helps Jack stagger to his feet, supporting his weight. He's weak...

ALYSSA
You look like shit. What the hell happened to you, Jack? Where you been?

JACK
I'm okay... I can walk...
(link)
Just get me... get me...

3) CLOSE. Jack's eyes flutter closed as he FAINTS, slipping out of Alyssa's grasp --

JACK
(ragged)
... Home.

4) Full-width panel. Low angle. Hands on hips, peeved, Alyssa stands looking down at Jack, who lies slumped unconscious in the mud at her feet...

ALYSSA
Oh, you gotta be kidding me.

PAGE 14

1) CLOSE. JACK suddenly sits BOLT UPRIGHT in bed, staring at us, wide-eyed in fear. Startled awake from a nightmare. Bare-chested, still unshaven --

JACK
AAH-!

2) BIG. Widen out to reveal the scene. Jack sits up on the side of the bed, naked, the sheet pulled around his waist. He's in a spare room at Alyssa's old colonial-style safehouse in New Orleans. The room is cluttered with boxes, packing crates and old junk; it's used for storage. Dimly lit by thin slivers of sunlight slanting in through louvered balcony shutters...

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
Bad dream. Just a bad dream.

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
I made it. Back to the world...

3) BIG. Exterior. It's a beautiful day in New Orleans. Jack has opened the shutters and stands BASKING in the warmth of the morning SUNLIGHT on his face. This is the first time he's seen natural daylight in years. The single sheet wrapped around his waist.

CAPTION - SHADOWMAN
Back to the light.

4) Small, close. Jack turns at the sound of a voice from behind him.

ALYSSA
(off-panel)
Finally, he rises.
(link)
Three days you been out.

PAGE 15

1) ALYSSA leans in the doorway of Jack's room, arms crossed, weighing us with a guarded, measuring look. Different clothes from when we last saw her.

ALYSSA
Your old clothes and shit are in those boxes. I meant to toss 'em, but...
(link)
Well. Anyway.

2) Jack smiles broadly as he moves over to her, reaching out tenderly to touch her cheek - but Alyssa holds up her hand to pause him.

JACK
Alyssa, you don't know how good it is to see you--

ALYSSA
Ease up, Romeo. You getting ahead of yourself.
(link)
Get some clothes on and we'll talk.

3) Big, for dialogue. Jack follows Alyssa; he looks pleading. Alyssa has turned from him, peeved, and is walking towards us, deeper into the house.

JACK
What's wrong...?

ALYSSA
You pop out the Deadside five years after walking out on me is what.
(link)
New Orleans been gone to Hell. We got Samedi cultists on the rise, all kinds of creepy shit crawling out the woodwork...

4) Jack's POV. Alyssa stops and rounds on us. She's strong, simmering, but in control of her shit. Let's be careful not to slide into the shouty "Angry Black Woman" stereotype.

ALYSSA
And me to deal with it all. Just me.
(link)
I had to drag your sorry ass out a swamp, and you got the nerve to ask me what's wrong?
(link)
I'd say you the one got some explaining to do!

5) Close. Jack can't believe what he just heard.

JACK
Five--
(link)
Five years...?!

PAGE 16

1) Later. Wide on the lounge/living room. Shelves of old books, arcane antiques. Jack is now dressed (check with editorial for clothing ref). He sits forward on the sofa. Alyssa sits curled in a comfortable armchair with a steaming mug of coffee. Between them, a low coffee table with a jug of coffee and Jack's full mug, untouched. The emotional atmosphere is calm now; it almost feels like an intervention, a psych session... or a confession.

NOTE: There are vertical bars over the ground-floor windows, so the morning sunlight casts prison-cell shadows across the scene.

JACK
I'm sorry.
(link)
Walking away from you was the hardest thing I ever did. And the dumbest.

2) Move in on Jack. Head bowed, eyes closed, ashamed. Elbows resting on his knees, fingers interlaced. Almost as if he's praying. Or confessing.

JACK
Ever since the shadow loa bound itself to me, all I could think about was getting free of it.
(link)
It made me so angry. Just filled me up with its crazy, stupid rage...

3) FLASHBACK. Shadowman (2012 costume) kneels in the Deadside dust; guilty, hopeless and heartbroken. (He has just murdered his own father, but we don't see the body). NICODEMO DARQUE stands over him, powerful, gloating; a different version of the final pages of SHADOWMAN: END TIMES issue 3.

CAPTION
"I made mistakes. Bad ones. Got blood on my hands.

CAPTION
"I lost hope. Lost myself.

CAPTION
"And Nicodemo Darque exploited that."

PAGE 17

1) FLASHBACK! MAGPIE stands amid the burning RUINS of an ancient, otherworldly city, grasping a smoldering, fire-blasted skeleton by the neck. The rubble is strewn with human bones. Magpie stands there, dominant, an unstoppable force of destruction, the cause of all this horror. He's the goddamn Terminator.

CAPTION
"Darque turned me into his puppet --

CAPTION
"The Magpie. A weapon to terrorize the Deadside.

2) FLASHBACK! Magpie atop a jagged peak of black rock, deep in the shadowy nether-world of the Deadside, BATTLING an overwhelming horde of glowing, murderous GHOSTS. They swarm up the rock like ants.

CAPTION
"When I finally got free, all I could think about was getting back to you. Back to the only good thing I ever knew in this life.

CAPTION
"But everything changed. The border was sealed - and I was trapped in the Deadside."

PAGE 18

1) Jack, haunted, remembering.

JACK
For months now I been fighting for my life. Fighting the dead. Fighting things I can't even name.
(link)
Until your *vèvè* pierced the dark. That connection - our connection...
(link)
It led me home. Led me to you.

2) Alyssa, grim, unsettled by what she's hearing.

ALYSSA
So you a killer now.

3) Two-shot. Jack looks at Alyssa, his eyes pleading, brimming with emotion. A man tortured by his own demons, wrestling for his very soul.

JACK
That's not who I am. Not who I am.
(link)
I-- I got a lot to atone for, I know. But I gotta make things right.
(link)
I gotta.

4) Alyssa.

ALYSSA
But you still the Shadowman, right? You got the power inside of you.
(link)
A power like no-one else...

5) Jack jumps to his feet in a sudden burst of frustrated anger --

JACK
But I can't control it! All it wants is to fight and kill-!
(link)
Don't you see? I'm not a hero, I'm a cage!

PAGE 19

1) BIG. Jack has his hands to the wall on either side of the window, leaning into it. Heavily burdened, head bowed. The barred window casts prison-cell shadows across him.

JACK
I'm so tired, Alyssa. So tired of fighting this thing inside of me...
(link)
And it wants out.

2) Alyssa pulls a heavy old leather-bound book from the shelf. The cover is embossed with the Shadowman symbol.

ALYSSA
Then we got our work cut out.
(link)
My whole life, I been trained to help the Shadowman. The ones came before you, they fought the shadow too. And lost.
(link)
All that history. All that legacy. And we still don't know near enough about what your loa really is.

3) Alyssa leafs through the old tome. A page shows the different VÈVÈS of the major voodoo loa (use real-world ref).

ALYSSA
We know it was exiled by the Voodoo Pantheon a long, long time ago...
(link)
But we don't know why.

4) Another angle on the book, showing an old tintype photograph of Union soldier MARIUS BONIFACE in 1865 (refs!).

ALYSSA
We know it was bound to your ancestor's bloodline in 1865...
(link)
But we don't know how.

PAGE 20

1) Wide. Jack turns to her from the window, grim. Alyssa looks up from the book, taken aback.

ALYSSA
We know you're the sixth Shadowman--

JACK
The last Shadowman.

ALYSSA
... What?

2) Close. Jack nails us with a look of grim resolve. Hard eyes.

JACK
I won't ever be a father. I won't hand this curse to an innocent child.
(link)
When I die, the loa dies with me.

3) Alyssa slams the book shut, frowning.

ALYSSA
... Maybe.
(link)
Or maybe it cuts loose and runs wild - without a human conscience to keep it in check.

4) Alyssa marches out of the room, toward us. Jack follows.

ALYSSA
Either way, we need answers.
(link)
And I know right where to start.

PAGE 21

1) Full-width slot. Angle over Jack's shoulder as he looks down at various items laid out on the KITCHEN worktop: an open carton of white eggs; a pound bag of plain flour; a plastic jug of milk.

JACK
Pancakes? We're starting with...
pancakes?

2) Widen to reveal the kitchen scene. Alyssa is taking a bag of rice from a high cupboard. Jack looks bemused.

ALYSSA
Eggs. Flour. Milk. Rice.
(link)
White food for Dambballah.

JACK
You mean like... white people food?

3) Jack's POV. Alyssa turns to throw us a look of disdain.

ALYSSA
Jesus, Jack.
(link)
For a guy bound to a loa, you don't know
one whole hell of a lot about voodoo.

4) Now Alyssa is in the hallway, crouching to rummage in a cupboard under the stairs. Jack follows, confused.

ALYSSA
You know music, at least...?

JACK
I played sax as a kid, but I haven't--

ALYSSA
Whatever. That'll work.

5) Alyssa's POV. She holds out an African DRUM to Jack, who now looks even more baffled.

ALYSSA
Just gimme four-four time on this.
(link)
Dambballah likes it orderly.

PAGE 22

1) BIG. Wide. Alyssa (carrying the tray of white food items) leads Jack (carrying the drum) up the stairs into the attic, which is now an ornately decorated VOODOO TEMPLE (or *hounfour*). Unlit candles, ornate rugs, colorful cloth drapes; heavy West African influence. Tribal masks of the Voodoo Pantheon arrayed around the walls. In the middle of the open floor, a THICK WOODEN POLE, inscribed with VÈVÈS, reaches from floor to ceiling - the sacred center of the ritual space.

JACK
You turned the attic into a temple...
(link)
So you a mambo now?

2) Alyssa kneels, carefully placing the tray before the pole. She turns to look back at us over her shoulder, with just the hint of a smile.

ALYSSA
The hell you think I been doing the last five years? Waiting on you?

Three-panel tier:

3) Small, close. Alyssa lights a cluster of candles.

4) Small, close. A shallow wooden BOWL heaped with white FLOUR, atop which sits a white EGG. Alyssa places it before the pole; an offering. Already there are clusters of lit candles, a bowl of cooked rice, a bowl of milk beside an earthenware jug, and WHITE FLOWERS.

5) Small, close. Jack's hands pat out a beat on the drum.

FX
[musical notes, 4/4 time]

PAGE 23

NOTE: Each panel on this page has straight-on, symmetrical composition; Damballah is an orderly loa. Then things will get decidedly disorderly...

1) Full-width slot. Alyssa kneels on the floor with her back to the pole and the offerings. She draws the VÈVÈ of Damballah in the air before her with magical fire...

ALYSSA
Damballah Wedo, oldest and wisest of all the loa, keeper of the cosmic balance...
(link)
Hear me now! Heed your faithful servant!

2) Full-width slot. EXTREME CLOSE on Alyssa GASPING as her EYES turn WHITE!

DAMBALLAH
(ragged; no tail)
What iss thiss...
(link)
... Sssacrilege?

3) BIG! Alyssa kneels in a white-eyed trance. A HUGE WHITE SNAKE - the loa DAMBALLAH - has coiled around her! A vèvè pattern along its spine, glowing like hot embers. Its head coils up over Alyssa's shoulder, looking straight at the reader, eyeing us suspiciously...

DAMBALLAH
(ragged)
You dare sssummon me in the presssence of thisss...
(link)
... Outcassst?

PAGE 24

1) Side shot. JACK steps forward, alarmed. The giant snake REARS UP at him, ready to strike! Alyssa remains in a ritual trance...

JACK
Alyssa, you okay-?

DAMBALLAH
(ragged)
Do not ssspeak!
(link)
You defile thisss sssanctuary...

2) Jack's POV on the great serpent, staring at us --

DAMBALLAH
(ragged)
Unruly shadow. You are taboo!
(link)
You have never ssserved the Pantheon. You show usss no ressspect...
(link)
We will not ssspeak your name.

3) On Jack, tense, cautious --

JACK
My-- My name...?

4) Extreme close on the snake, its slit-pupil eye drilling into us --

DAMBALLAH
(ragged)
Hasss it been ssso long that you do not remember? Perhapsss...
(link)
Ssso much the better!

PAGE 25

1) Alyssa SLUMPS FORWARD to the floor! Jack rushes forward to help her, alarmed. The snake has vanished.

ALYSSA
Ungh...

JACK
Alyssa-!

2) POV looking down over Jack's shoulder. Alyssa kneels, slumped forward, weak and groggy, HER FACE HIDDEN. Jack crouches over her, concerned, putting a reassuring hand to her shoulder...

JACK
It-- It didn't work. I'm sorry. The Pantheon, they...
(link)
I think they're <u>pissed</u> at me.

3) BIG! SAME ANGLE. Jack instinctively FLINCHES BACK as Alyssa suddenly LOOKS UP AT US! Except she isn't Alyssa any more - she's BARON SAMEDI! A skeleton with a shadowed partial eclipse on his skull face; a crooked top hat sat at a jaunty angle; bare ribs exposed beneath his rotting black coat-tail jacket; a handful of cigars in his breast pocket. He carries a black cane topped with a silver skull. He GRINS with malevolent glee --

<u>LETTERING NOTE</u>: See past issues for Samedi's distinctive lettering style.

BARON SAMEDI
Oh, you don't know the <u>half</u> of it, Jack!

JACK
<u>AAH</u>-!

PAGE 26

1) Jack SNARLS, fists clenched, ready to fight --

JACK
Baron Samedi-!
(link)
I'll say this once --

2) BIG! Baron Samedi rises to his feet in the foreground, his back to us. Facing him, Jack transforms into SHADOWMAN!

NOTE: From this point forward, Shadowman wears whatever Jack was wearing. The white skull face-paint magically appears, plus maybe also the Shadowman logo (check with editorial).

SHADOWMAN
Leave her alone!

BARON SAMEDI
Why's that, Jack? You want the lady all to yourself?
(link)
Can't say I blame you! Heh heh...

PAGE 27

1) Samedi GRINS - he's always grinning, he's a skeleton - as he SNIFFS the bunch of white flowers. His manner is cocky, playful, gleefully malevolent.

BARON SAMEDI
Figured I'd take her for a ride myself. After all, you ain't got what it takes no more to please no mambo.
(link)
Been a while for you, hmm...?

2) Shadowman raises his fist, snarling, angry, ready to strike. Samedi has raised his cane and GENTLY touches the tip to Shadowman's chest...

SHADOWMAN
Why you filthy--

BARON SAMEDI
Easy now.
(link)
You gonna have to check that temper.

3) BIG! Shadowman FLIES BACKWARDS as if struck by a mighty blow. But Samedi just stands there casually, cane held out in one bony hand. It wasn't a blow; Shadowman is hurled by the telekinetic power of Samedi's magic --

4) Shadowman is SMASHED through the wooden wall into the attic hallway!

FX
WHUNNCH

<u>PAGE 28</u>

1) On Samedi, sinister. The bunch of white flowers WITHERS in his bony hand, dead petals falling...

BARON SAMEDI
You listen up now.
(link)
Deadside is <u>my</u> province. Ain't no playground to come and go as you please.
(link)
And the Pantheon do love their rules and regulations, yes they do...

2) Shadowman clambers back in through the splintered wall, snarling --

SHADOWMAN
You don't want me in the Deadside, why'd you <u>trap</u> me there?!

3) Samedi lights a CIGAR from the skull-top of his cane, which has burst into flame --

BARON SAMEDI
To teach you a lesson.
(link)
And there's plenty more lessons to come. You'll see.

4) Samedi eyes us, sinister, blowing cigar smoke...

BARON SAMEDI
You need to toughen up, son. <u>War</u> is coming.
(link)
You best be ready.

PAGE 29

1) Angle on the cane in Samedi's hand - except it isn't a cane any more! It has transformed into Shadowman's articulated SCYTHE!

BARON SAMEDI
'Course, you gonna find it a little *tricky* *without* *this...*

2) Shadowman - crouched like boxer, ready to fight - moves towards Samedi --

SHADOWMAN
My Shadow Scythe-!

BARON SAMEDI
Seems somebody lost it in the Deadside.
And you know what they say...
(link)
Finders keepers!

3) Angle over Samedi's shoulder. FURIOUS, Shadowman GRABS Samedi by the lapel! Shadowman's other fist raised, about to punch him! Samedi grins, unafraid --

SHADOWMAN
Thief!
(link; jagged)
I'll kill you!

BARON SAMEDI
I did warn you about that temper, son.
Might be there's consequences.

PAGE 30

FULL PAGE SPLASH! Reverse angle, so we're now looking over Shadowman's shoulder. Samedi has transformed back into ALYSSA! Her eyes wide in fear; her hands coming up to protect her from the imminent blow. Shadowman still has her grabbed by the lapel; his fist raised, about to PUNCH her! He's so blind with rage, he might kill her --

ALYSSA
(jagged)
Jack, no-!

TO BE CONTINUED